

**INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY/DISTRICT  
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
INTERNAL NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM**

Property/District Name: Jersey Island Packing Houses Survey Number: S-304

Project: Demolition of Jersey Island Buildings Agency: DNR

Site visit by MHT Staff: ☒ no ☐ yes Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended ☐

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☐ None

Justification for decision: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map)

The Jersey Island Packing Houses are located on Jersey Island at Somers Cove, in Crisfield, Somerset County, MD. Together, the buildings are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as an historic district, under Criteria A and C.

The Jersey Island Packing Houses district consists of a tightly knit group of buildings located at the entrance to Somers Cove. The buildings, utilitarian in nature, were erected along the waterfront to receive and process bay seafood for shipment by truck to various markets. The extant packing houses on Jersey Island primarily date from the first quarter of the 20th century when the seafood industry was still in its prime in Crisfield. These buildings replaced the less substantial frame structures that appear in early photographs of the Crisfield wharf.

As a group, the buildings are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as an important event in the history of the seafood industry on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and under Criterion C as a cohesive and intact example of seafood packing houses, where crabs or oysters, depending upon the season, are processed and prepared for shipment.

Documentation on the property/district is presented in: Review and Compliance Files; MHT form (S-304)

Prepared by: MHT Form, Paul Touart, 1985

Kimberly Prothro Williams  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

November 7, 1996  
Date

Program concurrence: ☒ yes ☐ no ☐ not applicable

Patricia A. Ewing  
Reviewer, NR program

11/8/96  
Date

*gms*

## MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA - HISTORIC CONTEXT

## I. Geographic Region:

☒ Eastern Shore (all Eastern Shore counties, and Cecil)  
☐ Western Shore (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's)  
☐ Piedmont (Baltimore City, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery)  
☐ Western Maryland (Allegany, Garrett and Washington)

## II. Chronological/Developmental Periods:

☐ Paleo-Indian 10000-7500 B.C.  
☐ Early Archaic 7500-6000 B.C.  
☐ Middle Archaic 6000-4000 B.C.  
☐ Late Archaic 4000-2000 B.C.  
☐ Early Woodland 2000-500 B.C.  
☐ Middle Woodland 500 B.C. - A.D. 900  
☐ Late Woodland/Archaic A.D. 900-1600  
☐ Contact and Settlement A.D. 1570-1750  
☐ Rural Agrarian Intensification A.D. 1680-1815  
☐ Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870  
☒ Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930  
☐ Modern Period A.D. 1930-Present  
☐ Unknown Period ( ☐ prehistoric ☐ historic)

## III. Prehistoric Period Themes:

☐ Subsistence  
☐ Settlement  
☐ Political  
☐ Demographic  
☐ Religion  
☐ Technology  
☐ Environmental Adaptation

## IV. Historic Period Themes:

☐ Agriculture  
☐ Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning  
☒ Economic (Commercial and Industrial)  
☐ Government/Law  
☐ Military  
☐ Religion  
☐ Social/Educational/Cultural  
☐ Transportation

## V. Resource Type:

Category: BuildingHistoric Environment: RuralHistoric Function(s) and Use(s): Industrial/Warehouse (Packing House)

Known Design Source: \_\_\_\_\_

S-304  
Jersey Island Packing Houses  
Crisfield  
public

c.1900-1930

Jersey Island has been occupied throughout Crisfield's history by seafood packing houses. The small peninsula was for many years connected to Crisfield's downtown by a lift bridge. The two principal warehouses are L.R. Carson and the Milbourne Oyster Company, two early twentieth-century structures built of common bond brick and highlighted by decorative brick cornices. The two warehouses are squarish buildings lighted by single pane or two over two sash windows. Each building is bordered by wharf bulkheads on at least one side for unloading fresh seafood. The crabs or oysters, in their respective seasons, are processed within the waterfront buildings and then shipped by truck from Crisfield.

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. S-304

Magi No. 2003044711

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Jersey Island Packing Houses

## 2. Location

street & number Jersey Island, at the end of 10th Street ☐ not for publicationcity, town Crisfield ☐ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Somerset

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Various owners - see plat map

street &amp; number telephone no.:

city, town Crisfield state and zip code Maryland 21817

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Somerset County Clerk of Court liber

street &amp; number Somerset County Courthouse folio

city, town Princess Anne state Maryland 21853

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Survey No. S-304

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

☒ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved

date of move

\_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

### Jersey Island Packing Houses Description

The Jersey Island packing houses stand along 10th Street and the shoreline of the entrance to Somers Cove in Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland. The waterfront elevation of the packing houses faces northwest.

The two principal packing houses, L.R. Carson Company and Milbourne Oyster Company, are turn of the century brick warehouse-type structures built of common bond brick and highlighted by brick cornices. The two structures are squarish buildings pierced by single pane or two over two sash windows. Each building is bordered by wharf bulkheads on at least one side for unloading of fresh seafood by the watermen. The crabs or oysters, in their respective seasons, are processed within the waterfront buildings and then shipped by truck from Crisfield.

The interiors of these buildings were not fully surveyed, but usually consist of unfinished masonry walls with iron or sometimes wooden truss systems supporting a flat roof.

## 8. Significance

Survey No. S-304

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

### Specific dates

### Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

### SIGNIFICANCE

The Jersey Island packing houses are large utilitarian brick buildings erected along the waterfront to receive and process bay seafood for shipment by truck to various markets. The extant packing houses on Jersey Island primarily date from the first quarter of the twentieth century when the seafood industry was still in its prime in Crisfield. These buildings undoubtedly replaced less substantial frame structures that appear in early photographs of the Crisfield wharf.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. S-304

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

  
Zone Easting Northing

B 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

  
Zone Easting Northing

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Touart - Architectural Historian

organization Somerset County Historical Trust date 8/7/85

street & number 424 North Somerset Avenue telephone 651-0077

city or town Princess Anne state Maryland 21853

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438

## Addendum

S-304

Jersey Island Packing Houses

Somerset Co., MD

C. Mazurek, MD Department of Natural Resources

March 1997

Section 7.1

The Jersey Island Packing houses are seafood processing plants located on 10th street in Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland. These buildings are situated on a point of land, Jersey Island, which juts into the Little Annemessex River and forms the entrance to Somers Cove.

Presently, there are numerous seafood processing plants on Jersey Island, such as Mrs. Pauls Kitchens, H. Glenwood Evans and Sons, the Milbourne Oyster Company (Blue Point Buildings), and the Sterling building. This particular addendum form will concentrate on the documentation of the two latter plants, as they are unoccupied, owned by the Department of Natural Resources, and scheduled for demolition.

These two plants are essentially rectangular warehouses, constructed of concrete block, that are utilitarian in both design and materials. They are two stories in height with processing and packing spaces on the first floor, while the second floors are reserved as office space. The buildings are situated with at least one elevation bordering the water, so that watermen can unload seafood directly from their boats for processing within the plants. Three outbuildings on the site, used for storage space, are constructed of wood framing and covered with tin siding.

The design and function of the Sterling and Milbourne buildings is utilitarian, as are the building designs of the other seafood packing plants on Jersey Island. All are centrally located near the Annemessex River and Somers Cove to receive seafood shipments with as little impediment as possible. Large door openings located near the water ensured that the seafood was processed quickly and efficiently, as watermen unloaded it from their boats. Windows were laid out in continuous rows to light the interior spaces where workers were busy processing the fresh seafood shipments. The front entrances were surrounded by raised concrete loading areas for workers to load the packaged seafood into trucks. Roads and building lots were constructed wide to accommodate large numbers of shipping trucks, as well as workers. Essentially the layout of the buildings was a chain of distinct work areas: seafood unloading, processing, packing, and shipping. Building details and decoration are not the focus of the design, rather the focus is on work efficiency. This is a universal aspect of seafood packing plant design on Jersey Island, as well as on Somers Cove.



The Sterling building on Jersey Island is a commercial seafood processing plant constructed of concrete block painted white, and two-stories high. It is located closest to Somers Cove and is sited at an angle. The building has a rectangular plan and is detached from the other buildings surrounding it. A concrete block addition was added to the building, with the newer section constructed of smooth concrete block, while the older addition has a tin shed roof, while the older section has a slightly pitched tin roof. Windows and doors have their trim painted red to contrast with the white concrete block. Window placements are varied, and consist of either double-hung or fixed pane windows. A metal storage shed was added to the end of the addition for refrigerated storage.

The building's front (south) facade is comprised of two parts, an original section which is set back, and an addition. The original section has an outside wooden staircase leading to second floor office spaces. The window and door placements are asymmetrical with the first floor windows fixed pane in a row, and the second floor windows double-hung. An outside chimney is located on the right side of the building. The addition has a concrete service entrance walkway and loading dock where the packed seafood product is loaded for shipping. The windows and doors on both the first and second stories are arranged asymetrically. Windows have wood frames and brick sills that are painted red. Doors have wood frames and brick lintels that are painted red.

The building's side (west) facade has no doors, only a conveyor belt that allows materials to be moved to the interior work spaces. One double-hung, 1/1, wood frame window is located on the second story. This facade also has a metal refrigerated shed addition for the cold storage of packaged seafood.

The building's rear (north) facade borders the water and is used for the unloading of seafood. There are two sections; an original section on the left, and an addition on the right. The original section, on the first story, has three wooden doors and an exterior brick chimney. The second story has five double-hung, 1/1, wood frame windows. The addition has five, fixed pane, wood framed windows, as well as, one wood framed door. Space alongside this facade has been used for the storage of crab processing tables and crab pots.

The building's side (east) facade faces Somers Cove. The first story has one wood framed door, although one door and two windows have been closed with concrete block. The second story has two wood framed windows currently boarded up with plywood, and a window that has been converted into a vent.

The Milbourne Oyster Company building #2 is a concrete block, seafood packing plant located on Jersey Island. The building is situated with the west facade facing the Annemessex River at the entrance to Somers Cove. The plan is rectangular in design, two-stories in height, and detached - although the east facade is very close to a storage shed and appears to be attached. The pitched roof is constructed of tin, with an overhang on the front (north). Both double-hung, and fixed sash windows with wood and metal frames are located on the building. The doors are also both wood or metal. A raised concrete loading dock surrounds the north and west facades, to allow for both the receiving by boat and shipping by truck of seafood. The entire building has been painted white with blue trim on the doors, windows, and eaves, and is commonly called (along with the other buildings painted blue) the Blue Point buildings.

The front (north) facade is defined by a raised concrete loading dock spanning the length of the facade, and an overhanging eave which protects goods on the loading dock from the elements. The first story has metal framed, 2/2 sash, windows with concrete sills. An exception is the large, metal framed, fixed sash window on the left side of the facade, which lights an interior office space. There are also two wood framed doors located almost directly on the center of the building.

The side (west) facade faces the water and is the receiving area for the fresh seafood from fishing vessels. This area is surrounded by bulkheads and a concrete dock. A metal door is located on the left side of the building, as well as, two doors boarded up with plywood on the right side. Wood framing from a sign still remains on the second-story, but the sign itself is missing.

The rear (south) facade has ten windows, some double-hung, while others are fixed sash, set in a row to light interior work spaces. There are also water pipes, fixed on the outside, that run the length of the building.

The side (east) facade of the building leads to the business offices of the building. The north facades concrete loading dock extends to this side of the building and surrounds a storage shed that is detached from the main building. A metal roof covering this loading dock has curved metal support beams. One large fixed sash window and a metal door with a fixed sash window provide light to the first floor office space, located directly inside. Two metal double doors also lead into the interior of the building.

The Milbourne Oyster Company building #3 is a one-story, concrete block, seafood packing plant located on Jersey Island. It is detached from other buildings, but appears to be attached

to the shed on building #2. The concrete block is painted white with the door and window trim painted blue. Many shed additions built on this building make the appearance of the facades very complex, although the painted blue trim of the buildings is the one aspect that unifies and distinguishes them as all being part of the Milbourne Oyster Company. The roof is constructed of tin with a combination of styles, both pitched and shed. The doors and windows are of both wood and metal construction.

The front (north) facade has the most shed extensions and is the most complex in terms of building plan. A group of three sheds is arranged on the right side of the facade, all of which contain four metal doors and no windows. These sheds have been constructed in various stages, with their rooflines at various pitches. The left side of the facade is the packing space of the building, with seven wood windows, fixed pane, set in a row to light the work area. A wood door leads into the rear section of the interior building.

The side (west) facade borders the shed of building #2. There is no fenestration on this facade and only two feet of space exists between these buildings.

The rear (south) facade shows the combination of sheds by various roof pitches, yet the additions are set in a straight line and lack the complexity of design evident on the north facade. Two metal roll-up doors are present on the left side of the facade, while on the right side there are three wood, fixed pane, windows. A plywood addition has been added to serve as a covered entrance to the interior work spaces. The entire area in front of the south facade has been covered by the storage of crab pots.

The side (east) facade is a one-story, cinderblock addition providing a covered entrance into the main work area of the building. It also allows for more storage of seafood packing materials. There are three wood, 2/2, windows and two wood doors on this addition. One small, fixed pane, wood window lies above this addition underneath the building gable.

The Milbourne Oyster Company also owned three sheds across from its main processing and packing buildings. These sheds are located right on Somers Cove, although waterfront access was not very important since they were used primarily for material storage. Shed #4 and Shed #5 are set on raised cinderblock foundations, constructed of wood framing, and covered with aluminum siding. Windows are wooden and either double-hung, or fixed pane depending on the style chosen. Doors are constructed of wood and the tin roofs are pitched. The siding is painted grey, with the trim of the doors and windows painted the same color blue as the other Milbourne Oyster Company buildings. Shed

S-304

Section 7.5

#5 is constructed of plywood and set on a cinderblock foundation, with an aluminum roof. Windows and doors are wooden, if there are any in place at all. The exterior is painted grey, with the trim around the eaves painted blue. Generally speaking these sheds are shoddily constructed, with shed #5 being the most hastily constructed.

The front (west) facade of the Milbourne Oyster Company shed #4 has two doors and a window. One wide door opens to allow for large storage objects to be moved in and out, while the other door is an entrance and has 4 lights set into it. The window is 2/2, and double-hung.

The side (south) facade has one large storage door, and one 2/2, double-hung window. There are also four fixed pane windows on this facade.

The rear (east) facade has three fixed pane windows, one of which is set directly under the roof gable.

The side (north) facade has one wooden door, as well as, three fixed pane windows.

The front (west) facade of the Milbourne Oyster Company shed #5 has two metal, double-hung, 1/1, windows. There is also one metal door on this side of the building.

The side (south) facade of this building is devoid of any fenestration.

The rear (east) facade has one metal door, as well as, one metal, 1/1, double-hung window.

The side (north) facade of the shed also lacks fenestration.

The front (west) facade of the Milbourne Oyster Company shed #6 has four fixed pane metal and wood windows.

The side (south) facade has no fenestration.

The rear (east) facade has no fenestration.

The side (north) facade has one door constructed of plywood.

## Addendum

S-304

Jersey Island Packing Houses

Somerset Co., MD

C. Mazurek, MD Department of Natural Resources

March 1997

Section 8.1

There are many factors which led to the evolution, and eventual decline of the seafood packing industry on Jersey Island, Crisfield, Maryland. Technological advancements in transportation, the Chesapeake Bay's abundant supply of seafood, and rising consumer demand fueled the development of the packing industry in Crisfield, as well as other Eastern Shore communities. However the supply of seafood diminished in the Chesapeake Bay over time, which in turn led to increased competition among packers, and eventually the demise of many of the packing plants which had developed.

In the mid 1850's oyster bars in New England were overharvested, fueled by a large consumer demand for this delicacy. The economic potential of the Chesapeake Bay, especially the Crisfield area, was not realized until New England businessmen discovered the large oyster bars that existed right offshore.(1) Preserving the harvested oysters was helped by the introduction of canning procedures developed in the 1860's.(1) The extension of the Eastern Shore Railroad, which was authorized by the Maryland Legislature in 1835, dramatically improved the seafood industry in Crisfield. Caleb S. Maltby, an outsider from New Haven, Connecticut, established an oyster business in Baltimore during the Civil War, with oyster dredgers dredging the numerous beds off of Crisfield. The railroad was extended to Flint Point on the Annessex River, at the junction of Somers Cove for shipping of the oysters to northern markets.(2) However, the most important figure in the economy of Crisfield was John Woodland Crisfield who in 1866 brought a spur line of the railroad to Ward's Crossing. The railroad could not be extended any farther at that time because that was where stable soil ended for a roadbed foundation. Shipping of the packed oysters was now more efficient because they could be loaded in Crisfield, rather than being taken by oxcart to the rail line one mile away.(3) In honor of this achievement the town name was changed, from Somers Cove, to Crisfield.(2) John Carmen continued the development of the railroad, now called the New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk Railroad. Steamboats and freighting schooners still had a large share of the oyster shipping business, so the railroad sent Carmen to Crisfield to get more business. In 1874 he had the railroad extended to the waters edge.(3) Originally the railroad was to be extended to the Old Island terminus, where a seaport would be constructed, but it was a very expensive undertaking because the marsh soil had to be excavated by hand. Extending the railroad further

never commenced because of a lack of financial backing, oyster bars were dwindling, and there was no other industrial support in Crisfield.(3) The continuing advancements of the railroad allowed for the oysters to be dredged, packed, and shipped directly in Crisfield which in turn promoted even greater development in a town already growing extensively. Truck transportation allowed for shipments of oysters to be made even quicker than with railroads, with the added advantage that a fleet of trucks could deliver to various markets.

Much of Crisfield is constructed on oyster shells. Oyster shucking shacks and packing plants set up near the water and discarded the shells by the side. Over time huge piles of shells accumulated and filled in low lying marsh areas. As these areas filled in businesses built on this fill, in order to be closer to the water. No efforts were made toward utilizing these shells for propagation purposes.(3) The areas on each side of the railroad tracks in Crisfield were filled in with oyster shells to create building lots. In 1877 more than 200 structures lined the new streets of Crisfield, this was all just twelve years after the first locomotive, the "Newcastle", had arrived in the town.(2) During the late nineteenth century there were over one hundred and fifty seafood processing plants in the Crisfield area.(3) The main founders of the seafood industry in Crisfield: Kennerly, Hodson, Goodsell, and Lavalette, were non-local individuals who recognized the economic potential of the area.(4)

Jersey Island, which is where many oyster businesses were located, is almost entirely composed of discarded oyster shells. The majority of the seafood processing plants were basically shacks constructed of wood, some of which had second stories as homes for its workers. The people who had shacks on Jersey Island were rebelling against the major packers located in the downtown area, but they did not have the business sense to compete. They only had a minimal amount of oysters to market, as opposed to the major packers who supplied large quantities to buyers from out of town. As a result many of the smaller businesses on Jersey Island sold to the larger downtown businesses to survive.(5) An 1877 Atlas map displays four seafood packing plants on the Jersey Island site: Rice and Perry, T. J. Dixon and Mrs. Dixon, C. C. Gardner, and H. W. Holt. The middle of the site was divided by water, with a lift bridge connecting the two sections of Jersey Island. Before the end of the century this division was filled in with the discarded oyster shells of the packing plants. These four packing plants represent only the main plants on the Island, there were numerous other individual shacks on the site that were not represented on maps or in other historical accounts.(5)

On May 25, 1912 there was a major fire on Jersey Island, one

## Section 8.3

of the most disastrous in Crisfield history, which destroyed sixty oyster shacks. The fire lasted the entire day and left nothing of the wooden structures standing. After the fire Crisfield passed a city ordinance that any buildings on Jersey Island had to be constructed of brick or concrete.(3)

The Sterling building was constructed in 1917 by Wallace M. Quinn who ran his business, the Wallace M. Quinn Oyster Company, from its premises. Charles Sterling then bought the building and used it as a bottling factory, The Charles Sterling Beverage Company.(6) It was converted back into a seafood processing plant by Sterling, until the Department of Natural Resources bought the property. Presently the state has been renting the space for storage purposes.

The Milbourne buildings (Blue Point Buildings) were built by Gordy Milbourne, who was a member of the Maryland General Assembly, in 1958. The contractor was Billy Dougherty, a Crisfield builder, who built the complex in one year.(6) The site had always been used for seafood processing, except when the Department of Natural Resources acquired the property and rented it out as storage space.

The three sheds were built in the 1930's and were independently owned by various transitory oyster shuckers for a number of years. The Milbourne Oyster Company then acquired the three sheds, when it built its present building on the site. Viola Justice operated a sandwich shop out of the buildings, selling lunch to oystermen and workers at the plants.(6).

The use of the interior spaces of oyster packing buildings on the Eastern Shore is fairly universal. The spaces are divided into three distinct areas: shucking, packing, and office. Buildings with a second story, such as the Sterling building, have office space on upper levels, while lower levels are retained for shucking and packing. One story packing plants have office space in a separate area, away from the shucking and packing areas. The interior rooms are rectangular in shape and very functional with very little, if any decoration. Electric lighting in the form of fluorescent ceiling lights are supplemented by windows.

The oyster business from bay to market has many steps, the first being that watermen gather the oysters from the bay by either a tong or dredge. Bushels of oysters are brought to the docks and unloaded at the oyster packing buildings, which are then quickly moved inside to the shucking area. Shuckers each have their own wooden stall, which is raised off of the floor, to shuck the oysters. The oysters are held on the edge and whacked with a small club, an oyster knife is then inserted to separate

## Section 8.4

the shells and remove the meat. A freshwater bath cleanses the oyster meat, and it is then put into a gallon tin. Shuckers are paid by the number of gallons of oysters they can shuck. These gallons are carried to the packing area where they are placed in various sized containers and then frozen for shipping (before truck transportation oysters were canned for shipment by railroad).(6) These containers are then packed in boxes and taken to the loading dock, where they are loaded into refrigerated trucks for transportation to market.

The Department of Natural Resources acquired the Sterling and Blue Point buildings on June 27, 1990. These properties were bought fee simple from the owners, Scott Tawes, Ray Sterling, and Blue Point Seafood, Inc., by the Department's Waterway Improvement Program. The properties are to be demolished in May of 1997 because they are in extensive disrepair and as such are a liability concern. Also this demolition will enable the Department of Natural Resources to expand it's Somers Cove Marina in the future.



Notes

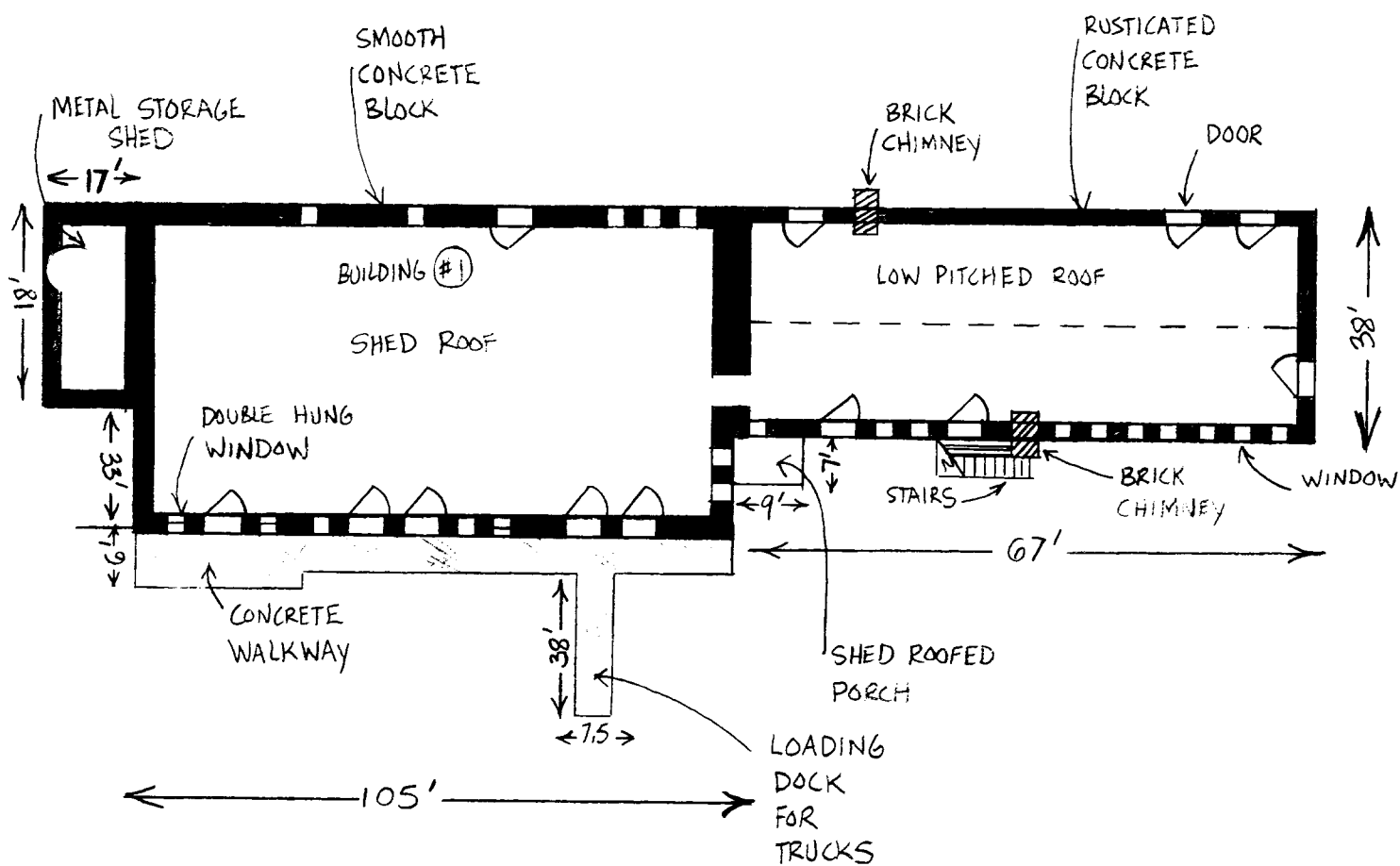
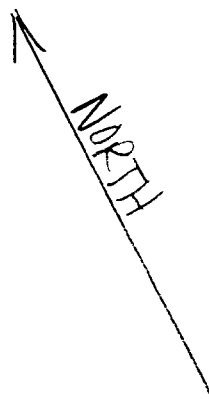
- (1) Touart, Paul. History of Somerset County.
- (2) Wilson, Woodrow T. Crisfield, Maryland 1676-1976. Gateway Press: Baltimore, 1977.
- (3) Wilson, Woodrow T. History of Crisfield and Surrounding Areas on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Gateway Press: Baltimore, 1974.
- (4) Maryland and Crisfield Facts, Pamphlet from the J. Millard Tawes Historical Museum, date unknown.
- (5) Interview with Jack Pall, the director of the J. Millard Tawes Historical Museum, Crisfield, Maryland, March 6, 1997.
- (6) Interview with Chaz K. Howard, former oyster shucker on Jersey Island, Crisfield, Maryland, March 26, 1997.

JERSEY ISLAND BUILDINGS  
SOMERSET CO., MD; CRISFIELD  
DRAWN BY C. MAZUREK, MARCH 13, 1997  
\*N. SCALE USED

SURVEY #  
S-304

#1

STERLING BUILDING



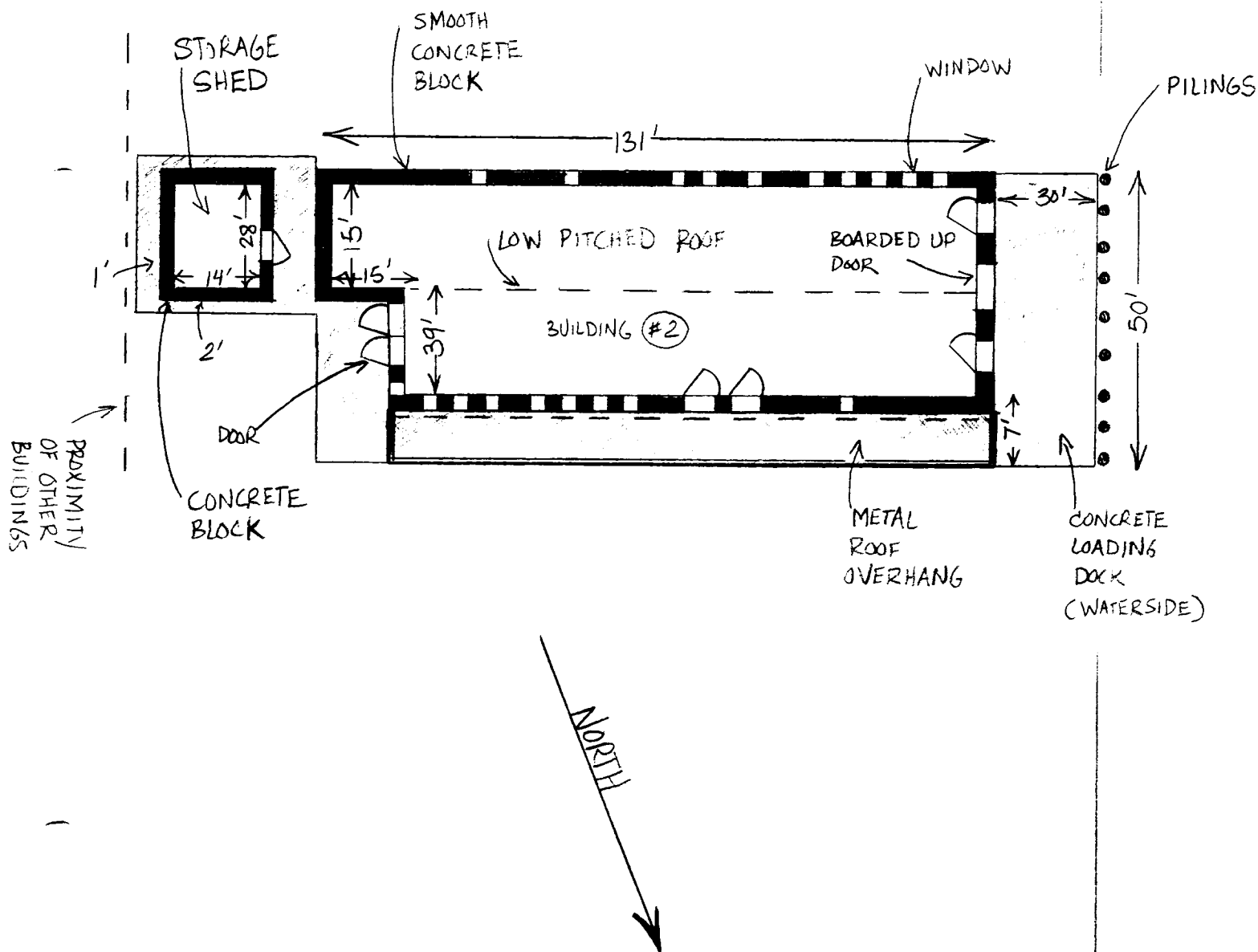
JERSEY ISLAND BUILDINGS  
SOMERSET CO., MD; CRISFIELD  
DRAWN BY C. MAZUREK, MARCH 13, 1997  
NO SCALE USED

SURVEY #  
S-304

#2

MILBOURNE OYSTER CO. BUILDING

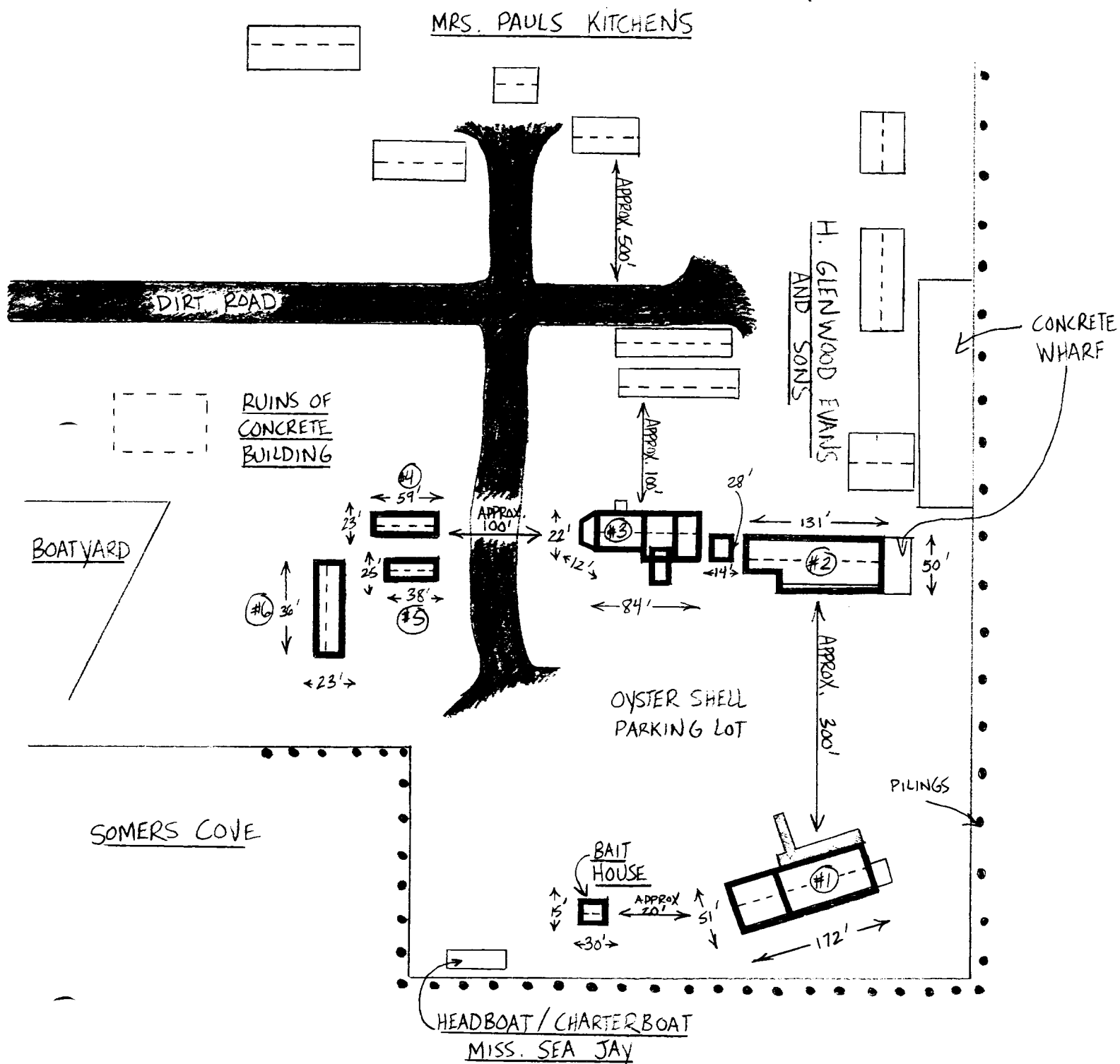
CRISFIELD  
HARBOR



JERSEY ISLAND BUILDINGS  
SOMERSET CO., MD.; CRISFIELD  
DRAWN BY C. MAZUREK, MARCH 13, 1997  
NO SCALE USED

SURVEY #  
S-304

NORTH

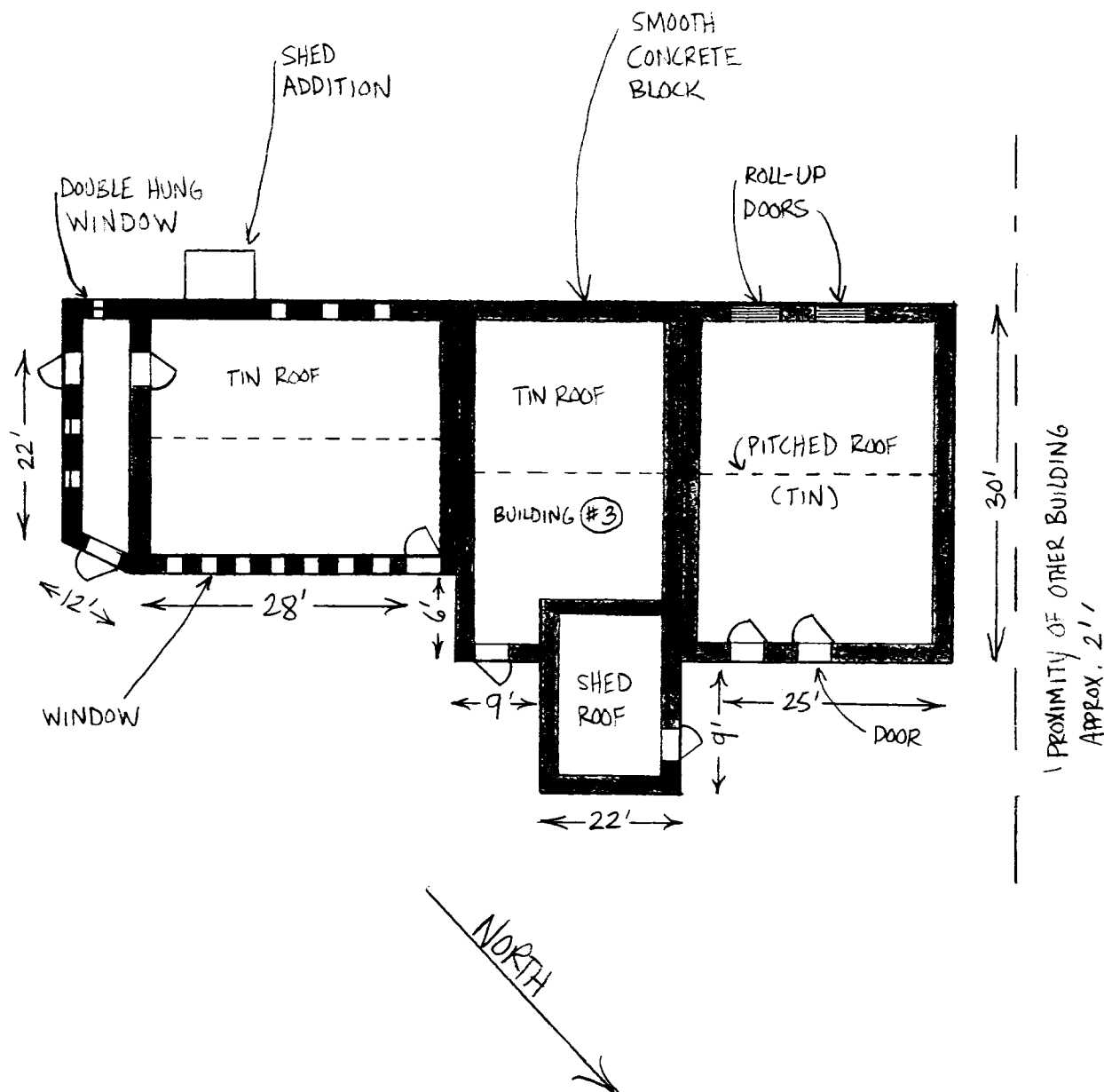


JERSEY ISLAND BUILDINGS  
SOMERSET CO., MD; CRISFIELD  
DRAWN BY C. MAZUREK, MARCH 13, 1997  
1" = 10' SCALE USED

SURVEY #  
S-304

#3

MILBOURNE OYSTER CO. BUILDING



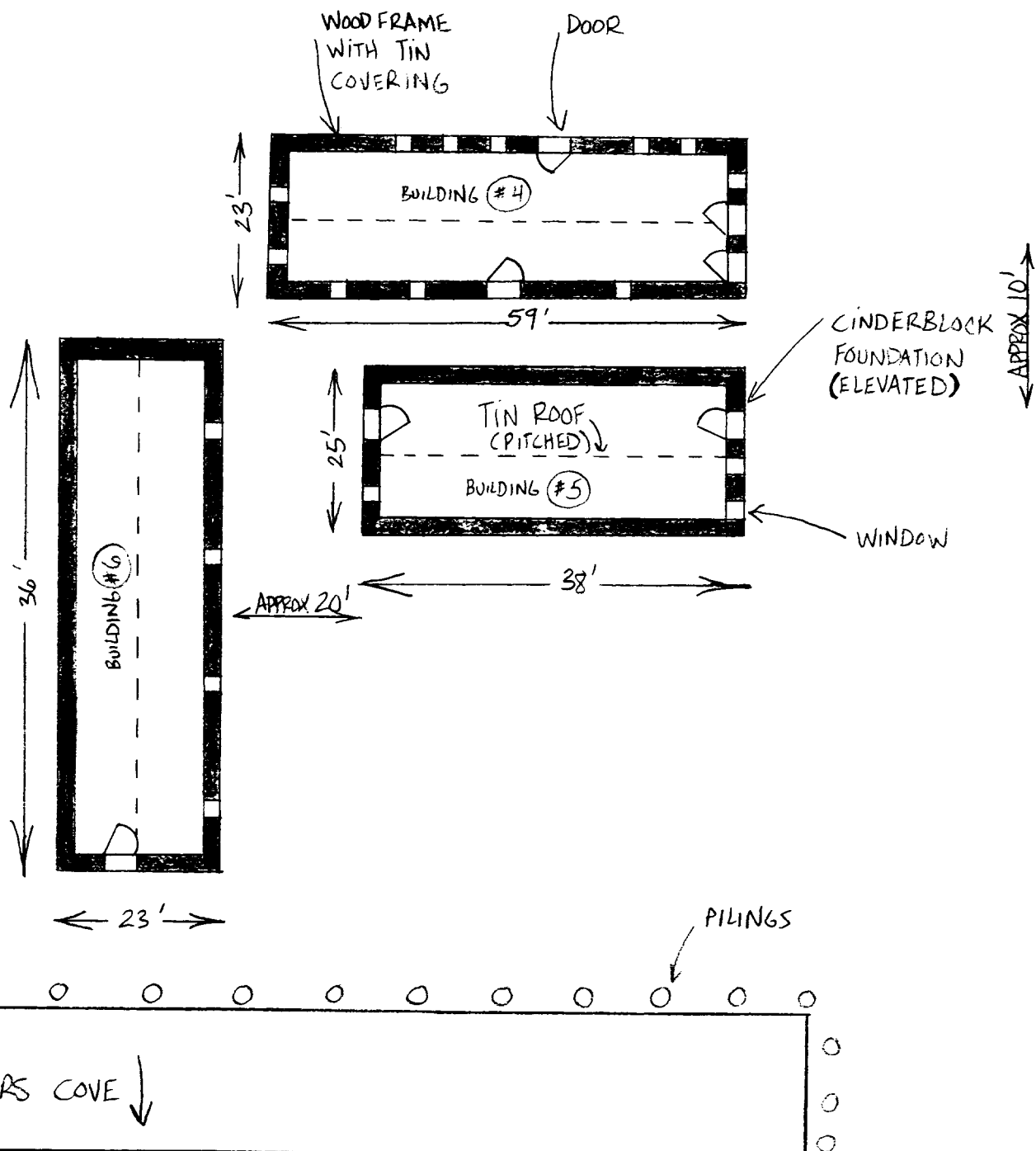
JERSEY ISLAND BUILDINGS  
SOMERSET CO., MD; CRISFIELD  
DRAWN BY C. MAZUREK, MARCH 13, 1997  
\* NO SCALE USED

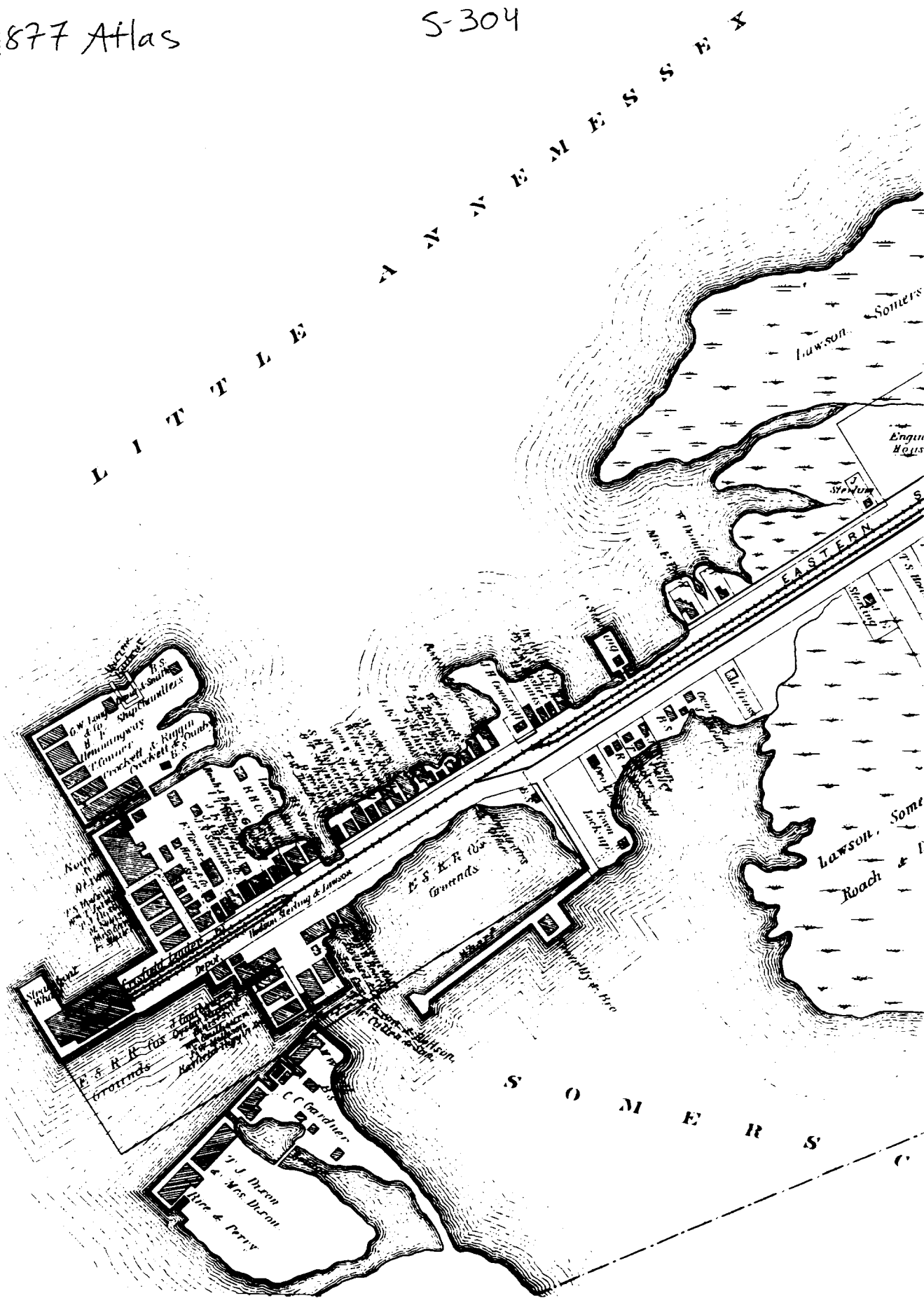
SURVEY #  
S-304

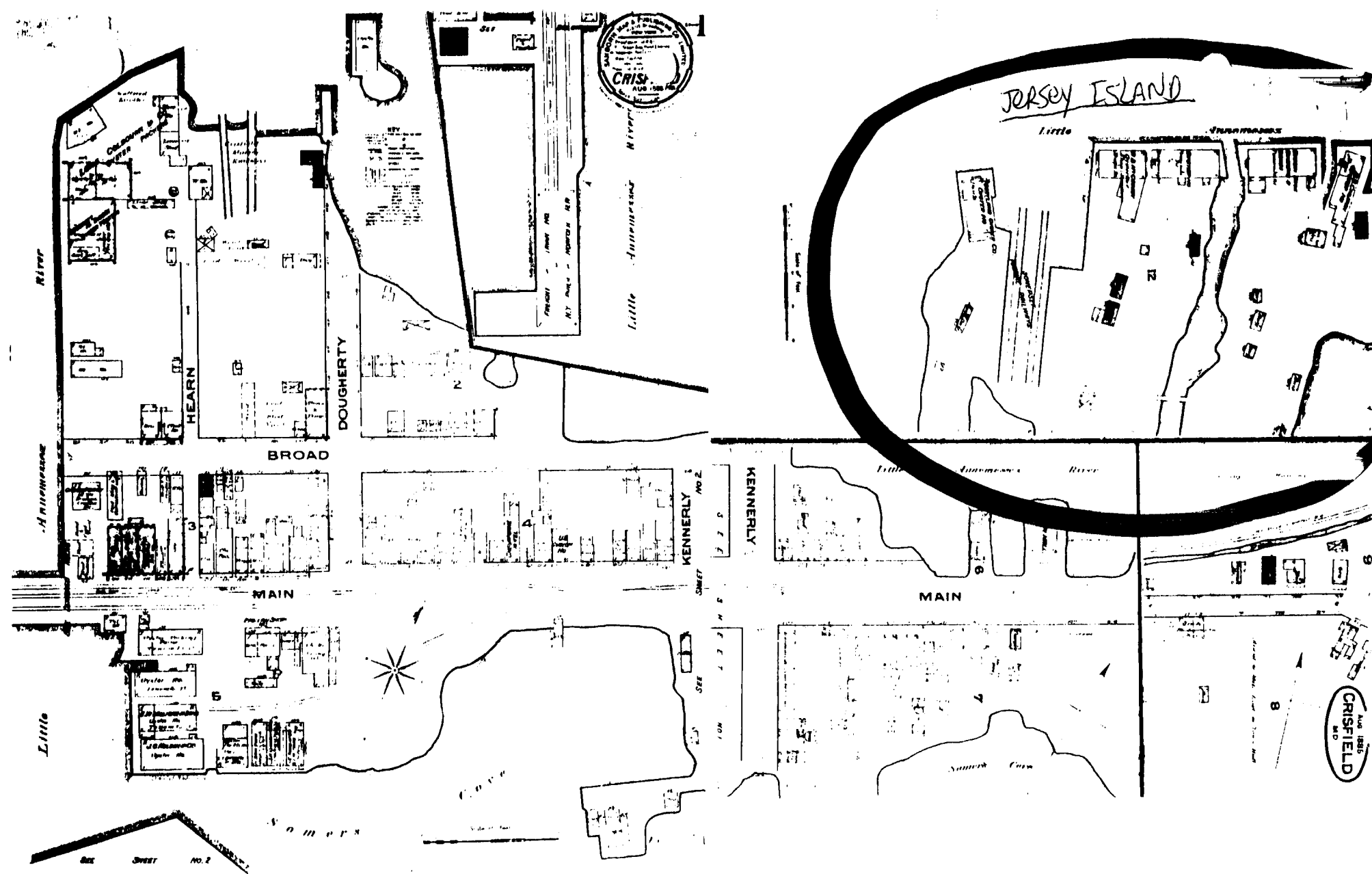
#4

MILBOURNE OYSTER CO., SHEDS

NORTH  
↓







S-304

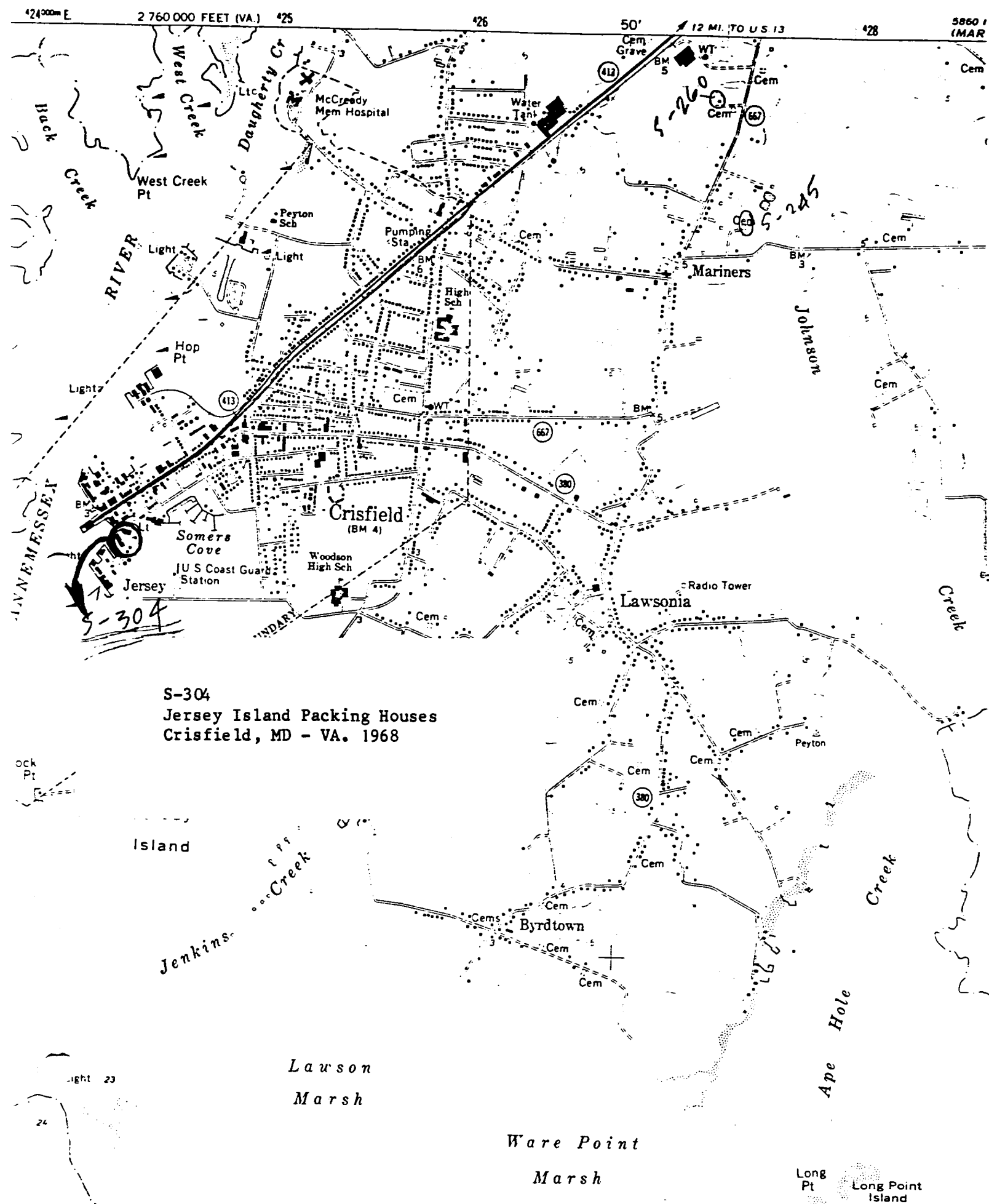
~~S-304~~

SANBORN MAP

1885



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY





Jersey Island Packing House  
Crisfield, Somerset Co., Maryland  
Southwest Elevation  
4/85, Photographer - Paul Touart  
Neg/Md. Historical Trust

S-304



S-304

STERLING BUILDING, JERSEY ISLAND

SOMERSET CO., MD

C. MAZUREK

MARCH 1997

MARYLAND SHPO

S.E. EL V-10

#1 OF 6



S-304

STERLING BUILDING, JERSEY ISLAND

SOMERSET CO., MD

C. MAZUREK

MARCH 1997

MARYLAND SHPO

N.E. ELEVATION

#2 OF 6





E-304

STERLING BUILDING - JERSEY ISLAND

SOMERSET CO., MD

C. MAZUREK

MARCH 1947

MARYLAND SHPO

N.W. ELEVATION (VIEW FROM DOWNTOWN

#306 CRISFIELD)



S-304

MILBOURNE OYSTER CO. BUILDING, JERSEY  
ISLAND

SOMERSET CO., MD

C. NAZAREK

MARCH 1997

MARYLAND SHPO

N.E. ELEVATION

#4 OF 6



S. 304

MILBOURNE OYSTER CO. BUILDING, JERSEY  
ISLAND

SOMERSET CO., MD

C. MAZUREK

MARCH 1997

MARLAND SHPO

N.W. ELEVATION

#5 OF 6



S-304

MILBOURNE OYSTER CO. BUILDINGS, JERSEY  
ISLAND

SOMERSET CO., MD

C. MAZUREK

MARCH 1997

MARYLAND SHPO

S.W. ELEVATION

1/2" = 1' 0"